Have you ever been waiting in line at the grocery store, innocently perusing the magazine rack, when a song **pops into your head**? Not the whole song, but a fragment of it that plays and replays until you find yourself unloading the vegetables in time to the beat.

You've been **struck by an earworm**, and you're not alone. Over 90% of people are plagued by earworms at least once a week, and about a quarter of people experience them several times a day. They tend to burrow in during tasks that don't require much attention, say, when waiting on water to boil or a traffic light to change. This phenomenon is one of the mind's great mysteries. Scientists don't know exactly why it's so easy for tunes **to get stuck in our heads**. From a psychological perspective, earworms are an example of mental imagery. This imagery can be visual, like when you close your eyes and imagine a red wagon, or it can be auditory, like when you imagine the sound of a baby screaming, or oil sizzling in a pan. Earworms are a special form of auditory imagery because they're involuntary. You don't plug your ears and try to imagine "Who Let the Dogs Out,"or, well, you probably don't. It just i**ntrudes onto** your mental soundscape and **hangs around** like an unwanted house guest. Earworms tend to be quite vivid and they're normally made up of a tune, rather than, say, harmonies. A remarkable feature of earworms is their tendency **to get stuck in a loop**, repeating again and again for minutes or hours. Also remarkable is the role of repetition in sparking earworms. Songs tend to get stuck when we listen to them recently and repeatedly. If repetition is such a trigger, then perhaps we can blame our earworms on modern technology. The last hundred years have seen an incredible proliferation of devices that help you listen to the same thing again and again. Records, cassettes, CDs, or streamed audio files. Have these technologies bread some kind of unique, contemporary experience, and are earworms just a product of the late 20th century? The answer comes from an unlikely source: Mark Twain. In 1876, just one year before the phonograph was invented, he wrote a short story imagining a **sinister takeover** of an entire town by a rhyming jingle. This reference, and others, show us that earworms seem to be a basic psychological phenomenon, perhaps exacerbated by recording technology but not new to this century. So yes, every great historical figure, from Shakespeare to Sacajawea, may well have **wandered around** with a song stuck in their head. Besides music, it's hard to think of another case of intrusive imagery that's so widespread. Why music?

Why don't watercolors get stuck in our heads?Or the taste of cheesy taquitos?One theory has to do with the way music is represented in memory.When we listen to a song we know,we're constantly hearing forward in time, anticipating the next note.It's hard for us to think about one particular musical moment in isolation.If we want to think about the pitch of the word "you" in "Happy Birthday," we have to start back at "Happy," and sing through until we get to "you."In this way, a tune is **sort of like a habit**. Just like once you start tying your shoe, you're on automatic until you tighten the bow, once a tune is suggested because, for example, someone says, "my umbrella," we have to play through until it reaches a natural stopping point, "ella, ella, ella." But this is largely speculation. The basic fact remains we don't know exactly why we're **susceptible to earworms.** But understanding them better could give us important clues to the workings of the human brain. Maybe the next time we're plagued by a Taylor Swift tune that just won't go away,we'll use it as the starting point for a scientific odyssey that will unlock important mysteries about basic cognition. And if not, well, we can just **shake it off**

Match the phrasal verbs with their definitions.

1. Pop into your head	a. Fixed and unable to be moved for some time
2. Struck by an earworm	b. Appear suddenly in your mind
3. Get stuck in your head	c. Get rid of it, forget about
4. Intrude onto	d. Hit by a tune that you keep thinking ,even when you don't want to.
5. Get stuck in a loop	e. Easily affected by catching tunes
6. Sinister takeover	f. A kind of thing you do regularly
7. Wander around	g. Interrupt/ disturb your privacy
8. Sort of like a habit	h. Move slowly without a purpose
9. Susceptible to earworms	i. Dangerous control over sth
10. Shake it off	j. Fixed in a circle, repeat again and again

Watch the video and explain the highlighted words.

Answer the questions.

1. How many people are struck by earworms and how often does it happen?
2. What kind of tasks are people involved in when some tunes pop into their head?
3. What is a mental imagery?
4. What do the author mean by the phrase " **get stuck in a loop**"?
5. Are earworms just a product of the late 20th century?
6. Why music not watercolors get stuck in our heads?
7. What's your advice how to shake off a catchy tune?